

INFORMATION FOR ADOPTING PARENTS

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Of all priceless gifts to an adoption is the warm accepting heart that takes to itself a child in need and by natural wisdom understands the real way of giving security and a happy childhood. Many-most-adopters adopt in great good faith and want to do their best, but they often have inner reservations. They want a child whom first of all, will measure up to their requirements; that is to say a child who will be educationally and socially a credit to them. They take a baby from an adoption society, a healthy baby with reasonably intelligent parents - a normal baby, of the sex, colouring, interesting appearance that appeals to them (which is far more than they could be sure of from their natural born off-spring if they had them) and then they take it for granted that if the child falls short of their expectations at school, in behaviour or morally, then this is somehow due to the child's "heredity".

HEREDITY?

Nobody knows where the effects of heredity leave off and those of environment take over, but there is strong reason to suppose that environment is enormously important, and this means that a child develops not just as he is told to do, but as he watches his parents and other grownups behaving and speaking. I do not think that all of us give particularly good example to children. Children are also influenced by the unspoken, but felt, attitudes of their adopting parents. They feel their critical attitude, they feel it if they are watched for "heredity" to come out, they feel it if there is hesitation over "telling" - telling about adoption, telling about natural parents and so on. Children are shaped by the things unsaid but which they feel in their bones.

Not only things unsaid of course! I have had the experience of sitting in a crowded room on a private social occasion and of receiving the confidences of a worried adopting father, with the boy of 14 or 15 sitting a few feet away looking at television. This is one fault of grown-ups; they will talk about their children within earshot of those children, just as if they were deaf, dumb and blind. Not only adopting parents do this; other parents do the same, also educational psychologists, teachers, advisers, on the problems of children and others. One catches oneself doing it unless one is careful. Thus, children - especially adopted children - cannot long remain unaware of the fact that they are regarded, actually or potentially, as a problem. This attitude produces some, if not most, of the problems of adoption; difficult behaviour at adolescence, a lack of harmony in parent-child relationships, and so on - a whole gamut of difficulties.

FAMILY ATTITUDES:

I do not want to seem too hard on adopting parents, because they are certainly not always at fault, of course. But I think all adopting parents should be helped to start off with the awareness that it is they, in the first place, who usually make or mar an adoption. The child responds in his degree to family and community attitudes; and the expectation that an adopted child will somehow behave differently from, and worse than, "ordinary" children is still extraordinarily potent in adoption relationships.

There are tragic adoptions where nobody is at fault. A couple adopted a little boy who at the age of two or three developed symptoms of a regressive mental condition which eventually required his admission to an institution. The adopters felt the financial and legal burden of his adoption very much, although they loyally continued to visit the boy and take an interest in him. This is one of the risks that adopters, like ordinary parents incur, but many of these problems which can be regarded as an act of God are often triumphantly surmounted by adopters. Another couple who found that their little adopted daughter was also suffering from some rare mental condition which meant she would not live long, loved her dearly and felt her presence as a great blessing in the family; and some other adopters who found that their little adopted child was spastic, fought all the authorities to get the treatments which (correctly, as it turned out) they thought would enable their daughter to live a quite normal life.

As so often with most of us, when faced with a practical problem that we can do something about, adopters usually behave just like born parents when given a problem they feel they can get their teeth into. It is the problem which, they think, arises out of adoption and the suspected different nature of adopted children, that seems to paralyse them.

TELLING

This especially shows itself in all the complex business of telling. Adopters are told over and over again, by adoption societies, by the statutory social workers who visit them in connection with adoption, by the courts, by magazine articles, that they should tell a child he is adopted as soon as he can understand what this means. This is a merely minimal requirement, and yet over and over again we meet or hear about the child who is never told or told too late, the child who on first going to school is told by some child that he is a bastard, or the child who finds revealing documents in an unlocked living-room drawer. We read of adopted children driven distraught by the shock of sudden knowledge that they were not, as they had supposed, born into their families, who have taken to crime or immorality or have committed suicide as a result. We do not read of the thousands of children who also get this bad shock but who do not react so extremely yet who nevertheless are inwardly seriously disturbed.

Adopters do not always know that adopted children have had this traumatic experience, and so have no clue sometimes when children - perhaps years later - develop symptoms of disturbance. They also do not realise that quite small children have great delicacy in avoiding discussion of adoption when, with extreme reluctance, adopters have revealed the bare fact that they were adopted. The children realise with great clarity that "mummy will be upset" if they ask questions. It is natural for children to enquire further about their adoption, not in an obsessed way, but in the course of conversation over the years, so as to build up the picture of their own background which they need; if they do not ask questions it may be because an unhealthy reticence is building up inside, and that this may hide an unhappiness that the adopters do not suspect. As to the reluctance with which many adopters approach "telling". I think that the adopters themselves need to look at their own hidden feelings while the children are quite small for to me it suggests far more than the wish merely to avoid hurting the child. But here again, we come back to the adopters, and put fairly and squarely on their plate all or most of the problems they think belong to the adopted child.

Of course, lucky are the adopters who live in a community which supports and helps the adoption. Community attitudes too, help to produce problems or to prevent them.

The first part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the general principles of the theory of the structure of the atom. It is shown that the structure of the atom is determined by the laws of quantum mechanics, and that the laws of quantum mechanics are based on the principle of the conservation of energy. The second part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the experimental results of the study of the structure of the atom. It is shown that the experimental results are in good agreement with the theoretical predictions of the theory of the structure of the atom.

The third part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the application of the theory of the structure of the atom to the study of the properties of matter. It is shown that the theory of the structure of the atom can be used to explain the properties of matter, such as its electrical conductivity, its magnetic properties, and its optical properties. The fourth part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the application of the theory of the structure of the atom to the study of the properties of the nucleus. It is shown that the theory of the structure of the atom can be used to explain the properties of the nucleus, such as its stability, its size, and its energy levels.

The fifth part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the application of the theory of the structure of the atom to the study of the properties of the elementary particles. It is shown that the theory of the structure of the atom can be used to explain the properties of the elementary particles, such as their mass, their spin, and their interactions. The sixth part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the application of the theory of the structure of the atom to the study of the properties of the universe. It is shown that the theory of the structure of the atom can be used to explain the properties of the universe, such as its expansion, its contraction, and its evolution.